Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel Claims 1 and 10. Please amend Claims 2, 4-9, 11, 12, and 14-20. The Claim Listing below will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

Claim Listing

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 wherein the grooming of inbound and outbound traffic is performed independently.

3. (Original) The method according to Claim 2 wherein the grooming of inbound and outbound traffic is performed free of tandem tying the first and second transport switches.

4. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 further including configuring the at least one local switch to operate with the first and second transport switches.

5. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 further including performing protocol switching at the at least one local switch.

6. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 further including performing grooming at at least a third transport switch.

7. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 wherein the first and second transport switches are at least one of the following:

wideband crossconnect switches, narrowband crossconnect switches, or broadband crossconnect switches.

8.   (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 performed in a central office.

9.   (Currently amended) The method according to ~~Claim 1~~ Claim 19 performed in an electrical, optical, or wireless network.

10.   (Canceled)

11.   (Currently amended) The system according to ~~Claim 10~~ Claim 20 wherein the first transport switch and second transport switch operate substantially free of intermachine tandem ties.

12.   (Currently amended) The system according to ~~Claim 10~~ Claim 20 wherein the local switch is configured to operate with the first and second transport switches.

13.   (Previously presented) A system for grooming network traffic in a digital cross connect, comprising:

a first transport switch that grooms inbound traffic into different forms of lower-bandwidth signals for multiple protocol switches that handle traffic of different protocols; and

a second transport switch that grooms outbound traffic for the multiple protocol switches.

14.   (Currently amended) The system according to ~~Claim 10~~ Claim 20 further including a third transport switch that grooms other traffic.

15.   (Currently amended) The system according to ~~Claim 10~~ Claim 20 wherein the transport switches are at least one of the following:

a wideband crossconnect switch, narrowband crossconnect switch, or broadband crossconnect switch.

16.   (Currently amended) The system according to ~~Claim 10~~ Claim 20 used in a central office.

17.   (Currently amended) The system according to ~~Claim 10~~ Claim 20 used in an electrical, optical or wireless network.

18.   (Currently amended) A system for grooming network traffic in a digital cross connect, comprising:

        means for grooming inbound traffic at a first transport switch from among multiple transport switches for at least one local switch, the at least one local switch transmitting the groomed inbound traffic to at least one destination other than the multiple transport switches, and the first transport switch separating higher speed traffic streams into lower speed traffic streams; and

        means for grooming, at a second transport switch from among the multiple transport switches, outbound traffic received at the at least one local switch from at least one source other than the multiple transport switches, the second transport switch packing lower speed traffic streams into higher speed traffic streams, and the first transport switch being distinct from the second transport switch.

19.   (Currently amended) ~~The method according to Claim 1~~ A method for grooming network traffic in a digital cross connect, comprising:

        grooming inbound traffic at a first transport switch from among multiple transport switches for at least one local switch, the at least one local switch transmitting the groomed inbound traffic to at least one destination other than the multiple transport switches, and where[[in]] grooming the inbound traffic at the first transport switch includes separating higher speed traffic streams into lower speed traffic streams; and

        grooming, at a second transport switch from among the multiple transport switches, outbound traffic received at the at least one local switch from at least one source other than the multiple transport switches, [[and]] where grooming the outbound

traffic at the second transport switch includes packing lower speed traffic streams into higher speed traffic streams.

20. (Currently amended) ~~The system according to Claim 10~~ A system for grooming network traffic in a digital cross connect, comprising:

a first transport switch, from among multiple transport switches, that grooms inbound traffic for at least one local switch by ~~wherein the first transport switch separates~~ separating higher speed traffic streams into lower speed traffic streams, the at least one local switch transmitting the groomed inbound traffic to at least one destination other than the multiple transport switches; and

a second transport switch, from among the multiple transport switches, that grooms outbound traffic received at the at least one local switch from at least one source other than the multiple transport switches by ~~, and the second transport switch packs~~ packing lower speed traffic streams into higher speed traffic streams.